

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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MUSEUM EXHIBITION RECALLS ARTISTIC STYLES OF 1920S AND 30S

While early 20th-century painters and sculptors in Europe and America experimented with cubism and other new forms of artistic expression, contemporary designers and craftsmen also sought to create decorative and useful objects in a modern style. An exhibition of decorative objects, paintings, and graphics, on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art through August 21, 1983, illustrates artistic styles and tastes in Europe and America during the 1920s and 30s and presents outstanding examples of the decorative style which critics have recently labeled "art deco."

The nearly seventy works in the exhibition were selected by Henry Hawley, chief curator of later Western art at the Cleveland Museum, principally from the Museum's collections, with several loans from private collectors. Few of the Museum's works in the show have been exhibited in recent years.

Included are superb examples of French glass, Danish silver and ceramics, and French textiles, as well as various works in bronze--from a hand mirror by the French designer René Lalique to the Kneeling Dancer by the American sculptor Elie Nadelman. Paintings, related in theme or style to the decorative objects on view, include works by the French artists Georges Braque, Raoul Dufy, and André Derain, and the American artists Lyonel Feininger and Georgia O'Keeffe.

One of the finest and most important objects in the exhibition is a thick-walled glass vase deeply etched on opposite sides with mask-like faces. By Maurice Marinot, one of the greatest of art deco glassmakers, the vase is a striking

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example of the influence of cubism and African sculpture--particularly African masks--on the decorative arts of the period. In another work by Marinot--a small bottle deeply etched with circular designs--the artist has used trapped air bubbles in the glass for decorative effect. Whereas Marinot's blown and sculpted glass was made by hand, so that each piece is unique, the other great French glassmaker of this era, René Lalique, used steel molds to mass produce his popular vases and bowls of opalescent and colored glass. Two vases by Lalique, one decorated with a design of feathers, the other with birds in low relief, and a small covered dish are typical of his work in molded glass.

Decorative objects in the art deco style show many borrowings from modernist painting and sculpture. To illustrate, Mr. Hawley has juxtaposed an etching of an Odalisque by Henri Matisse with an exquisite glass vase engraved with dancing nude figures. "The Swedish artist Edvard Hald very likely had Matisse in mind when he designed this vase for Orrefors," he explains.

The nude female figure, which is the subject of several other works in the exhibition, was a favorite motif with art deco designers. Other popular motifs--geometric designs, stylized flowers and fruits, and animals--are seen in ten French textiles dating from around 1930. Two of these textiles were designed by Raoul Dufy, one of a number of modernist painters who ventured into the field of applied arts. Another French painter, Jean Lurçat, represented in this exhibition by an oil painting, became a prominent tapestry designer.

Other works deserving mention, which have not been exhibited in many years, are a neoclassical drawing of a mother and child by Picasso and two works by American artists--a pastel drawing of an Amaryllis by Charles Sheeler and a wood sculpture of two dancing children by Gaston Lachaise.

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Several slide-lectures offered in conjunction with this exhibition will be presented in the Museum's Recital Hall. On Wednesday, July 6, at 8:00 pm, Berenice Kent, Cleveland collector, dealer, and authority on art deco, will lecture on the art deco style. On Wednesday, July 20, at 8:00 pm, Henry Hawley will survey architecture and decorative arts from 1900 through the 1930s, focusing on the more luxurious aspects of modernism. Sheila Webb, instructor in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education, will lecture on "Styles of Luxury: Art Nouveau and Art Deco" on three consecutive Wednesdays, beginning June 1, at 2:15 pm.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.